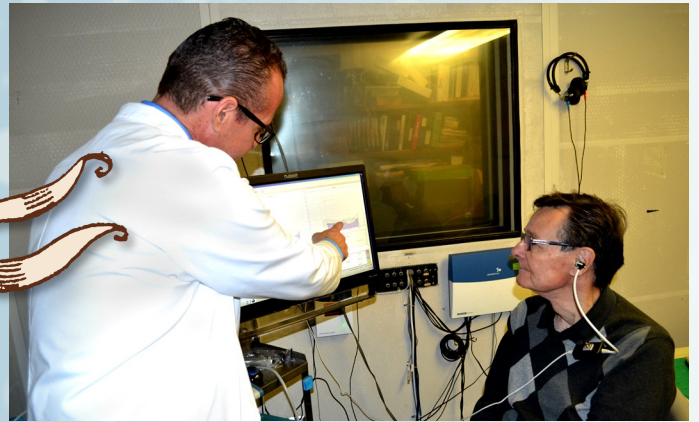


Rancho Los Amigos Steps Up to Help War Veterans

By Michael Wilson



United States Air Force Veteran Robert Keller, 65, spent four years in active military duty and two years in reserve military duty, which took him from training missions in the Arizona desert to a tour in Taiwan. The long-time Southern California resident, now retired, receives ongoing care for Chrohn's Disease, arthritis, and a hearing ailment at the Long Beach Veteran's Administration Hospital. Keller needs new hearing aids, but the first audiology appointment he could get at the Long Beach VA Facility wasn't until January of next year. His provider suggested a faster option – go to Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center (Rancho Los Amigos) in Downey.

With the Veteran's Administration struggling to keep up with its patient load, soldiers who suffer from the physical and mental effects of war are waiting for critical healthcare.

This summer, new federal legislation was signed into law allowing veterans to seek a range of outpatient services at community hospitals, including Rancho Los Amigos. Services provided include primary and specialty care, as well as an array of therapy, rehabilitation, and audiology care. The aim is to decompress the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) clinics and provide vets in the region with access to quality care at a nearby service location.

The catchment area for Rancho

Los Amigos is the Southern California VA region, which includes VA health facilities in West Los Angeles, Long Beach and Loma Linda.

While he's only had one visit to Rancho Los Amigos so far, Keller says his experience as a patient has been very good and tightly coordinated. He thinks the partnership between the VA and Rancho Los Amigos will serve vets like him well as VA facilities work to address capacity issues and open more appointments.

"The soldiers and sailors who've fought for our country in Vietnam, Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan deserve the best care we can possibly give them," said L.A. County Supervisor Don Knabe. "If the VA can't meet that obligation, we've got the capacity, we've got the skill, and we've got the will." The County and federal government are working together on an education effort to inform veterans of this new option.

Approximately 60 veterans have received care at Rancho Los Amigos in the past four months. The referral process and medical record sharing between the facility and the VA is optimized through the use of an intermediary, TriWest.

The Rancho campus is undergoing a \$400 million renovation that will advance its stature as a leader in neuroscience and rehabilitation services.

A Message From the Director



We are an Agency!

A few weeks ago the Board of Supervisors voted to integrate the Departments of Public Health, Mental Health, and Health Services. The goal of the integration is to align the work of these three great departments so that we can better address the complex social problems that affect Los Angeles County, problems like homelessness, substance addiction, and high rates of recidivism among persons leaving county jail. The integration will also allow us to provide more holistic care to specific populations such as children in and aging out of the foster care system, persons with mental illness, and those with chronic diseases.

I was honored to be asked by the Board to lead the Agency. I am looking forward to getting to know the people who work in our sister departments better, as we work together for the good of those who live in our County. In the discussions about the integration that occurred in the prior year, I met many people working in or with one of our three departments who spoke of the importance of making it easier for people to get the services they need. This is our chance to make our services and community programming more comprehensive.

I wish all of you Happy Holidays and a joyous New Year.

Awards Abound at Quality and Productivity Commission

By Michael Wilson

An inmate care services project jointly implemented by the Department of Health Services and the Sheriff's Department to reduce the need for inmate transfers out of the jail setting for non-emergent medical care earned a 'Top 10' accolade by the County's Productivity and Quality Commission (PQC) last month.

The annual event brings together elected officials, commissioners, department heads, and employees to recognize innovative efforts that improve County services. This year's programs are expected to result in more than \$75 million in estimated benefits to the County.

DHS received a total of 11 awards for efforts ranging from improving hospital bed utilization, to implementing a primary care stress lab and decreasing boarding time in the emergency room.

Launched in 2013, the Inmate Care Services Project started with an on-site urgent care unit at the Twin Towers Correctional Facility to reduce the number of transfers to the LAC+USC Medical Center Emergency Department and unnecessary outpatient specialty care visits at the hospital through improved access to specialists in the jail setting. With goals to improve collaboration and communication between county agencies, DHS director Mitchell Katz, MD, described the effort as a "win-win" for inmates, Sheriff's deputies, and physicians who can be more productive and see more patients in a secure setting.



(See 'PQC' on back)



(Above) L.A. County Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich joined Harbor-UCLA physician and Surgery/Emergency building Arts Beautification Committee chair Marianne Gausche-Hill, MD (pictured center), department leaders and committee representatives at the Productivity and Quality Awards ceremony. The committee included Harbor-UCLA employees Aileen Almazon, Lori Fields, Joan Taylor, Martee King, Shelia Mitchell, Thelma Muzik, Jules Heffner, Patty Pickles, Stanley Inkelis, Ellen November, Michelle Duman, Paula Siler, Robert Hockberger, MD and Bruce Stabile, MD in addition to donors, artists and volunteers.

Harbor-UCLA Medical Center received a coveted county image enhancement award for securing a collection of stunning artwork in its new Surgery-Emergency building with no acquisition budget. Through the hard work of a dedicated committee of nurses, physicians, administrators and volunteer artists, and with assistance from the L.A. Biomedical Institute, over \$200,000 of donated art was collected from over 150 staff and local artists. Over 400 paintings were printed and mounted on every floor. Each patient room has a piece of art and the courtyard features custom tiles printed with artwork from community children to enhance the healing environment. "The art beautification process brought together local artists and staff members as well as vendors



DHS Awardees

- Inmate Care Services Project – Top 10 “Bronze Eagle” Award
- Decrease Boarding Time in the Emergency Room – Special Merit Plaque Award
- Using Art to Create a Healing Environment – County Image Enhancement Award
- e-Consult Diabetes Co-Management Model – Plaque Award
- Expansion of Pulmonary Services – Plaque Award
- Primary Care LED Exercise Stress Lab – Plaque Award
- Frontline Teams Improve Gateway to Primary Care – Plaque Award
- Decreasing Cycle Time in Pediatrics Clinic – Plaque Award
- Identify Wasted Capacity & Improve Bed Utilization – Certificate
- Enterprise Health Information Management Dashboard – Certificate
- EENT Message Center – Certificate

and other organizations interested in art to work collaboratively towards the common goal of creating a healing environment,” said Harbor-UCLA physician and beautification committee chair Marianne Gausche-Hill, MD. “A stark, institutional environment was transformed into a gallery of healing enjoyed by all who pass through our walls.” A total of 56 entries were submitted by county departments this year for review showing cost benefit, linkages to Board priorities and County Strategic Plan, and productivity enhancement. The very best were selected by Commissioners and Productivity Managers for recognition. For more information on the Productivity and Quality Awards and to watch video highlights, visit here (http://qpc.co.la.ca.us/29th_pqa.asp).

Lives Remembered in Annual Burial Ceremony



Homeless advocates, religious leaders and community residents attended an annual burial and memorial service for the unclaimed dead on December 9 at the County cemetery in Boyle Heights. L.A. County has been conducting burials since 1896. The remains of 1,379 individuals who died in 2012 were buried in a simple plot on the grounds. County Supervisor Don Knabe said those buried were once children who were loved and no matter what direction their lives took, all deserved to be honored and remembered. LAC+USC Medical Center chaplain Father Chris Ponnet officiated the interfaith ceremony, which included readings and song by faith leaders from the Muslim, Christian, Native American, Hindu and Jewish traditions. The cremated remains of the unclaimed dead are held for three years by the County from the year of death to allow ample time for families to come forward to claim remains before burial.



And One More Thing...

L.A. County EMS Agency Director Cathy Chidester (center) joined members of the EMS Commission to recognize Community Paramedic pilot leaders from the UCLA Center for Pre-hospital Care, Glendale and Santa Monica Fire Departments. Community Paramedicine is an evolving model of community-based health care in which paramedics function outside of emergency response and transport roles. Two paramedicine pilots are now underway in L.A. County; one involves alternate transports for patients with non-emergent medical needs to urgent care centers, and the other uses paramedics to conduct home visits of patients with congestive heart failure (CHF) to reduce hospital readmissions. Pictured (left to right): Todd LeGassick, MPH, Cathy Jennings, RN, Baxter Larmon, PhD, Dr. Steven Rottman, Captain Jeff Ragusa, Cathy Chidester, EMS Agency Director, Engineer Joe Donnelly, Captain Todd Tucker, Marianne Newby, RN, Battalion Chief Vince Refino, John Telmos, RN and Dr. Clayton Kazan.

DHS Moves to ICD-10

By Harvey Jones

After 189 classes for inpatient coders and 158 classes for outpatient coders, our enterprise ICD-10 implementation was a success. ICD-10 refers to the 10th revision of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD), a medical classification list by the World Health Organization (WHO). It contains codes for diseases, signs and symptoms, abnormal findings, complaints, social circumstances, and external causes of injury or diseases. Last year coding managers and Health Information Management (HIM) directors met to craft the plan for a successful ICD-10 education path for coders throughout Health Services. There were two distinct areas of the new coding classification, and they had to be addressed separately as we considered the type of training needed. Concerning the ICD-10-CM diagnosis codes, we knew there would be a challenge going from 13,000 codes in ICD-9 to 68,000 ICD-10 codes, which would require the coders to look for new and more detailed information within the medical records. Injury diagnoses, for example, are grouped primarily by type of injury in ICD-9; in ICD-10-CM, injuries are grouped primarily by body area. Diagnosis in ICD-10 would require more specific knowledge of the human body than was necessary in ICD-9. This would require a refresher course in anatomy and physiology. The ICD-10 diagnostic terminology had been mod-

ernized and there are combination diagnoses and symptoms codes, so fewer codes may be needed to be reported to fully describe a condition. The surgical coding required much discussion on our training path meeting. The "PCS" in ICD-10-PCS codes stands for the procedural classification system. ICD-10-PCS is a completely separate medical coding system from diagnostic ICD-10-CM. PCS contains an additional 87,000 codes for use only in U.S. inpatient hospital settings, thus inpatient coders would need to know both CM and PCS. Due to the number of coders to be trained in DHS and the training needed, we knew our training needed to begin with online first and end with classroom sessions. After the Enterprise HIM office reviewed and finally purchased the training materials necessary for success, the HIM directors and coding managers began to construct the path of classes, being careful to create a schedule that would leave the least amount of backlog. Our path ended on October 1, as our trained, tested and retrained coders began coding in ICD-10. Coding managers are still meeting once per month to review challenging ICD-10 cases to sharpen their grasp on the coding classification. A second set of classes was launched through our Labor-Management partnership to give our coders a better chance to pass the national coding exam. This class was taught by our Coding and Compliance Manager and 14 coders passed the CCS national certification exam. I personally want to thank all of our HIM staff for a job well done.



The staff of Fast Facts wishes you joy and happiness this Holiday Season. Here's to a wonderful 2016!

